FROM BIKINI TO FUKUSHIMA

Oe, Kenzaburo

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Allow me, please, to talk on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Japan Society for the Studies in Journalism and Mass Communication.

On March 11, our country experienced a great earthquake and a Chernobyl-level accident at a nuclear power plant. Amid the flurry of global news reports of radioactive contamination, apparently there was a succession of cancellations by overseas panelists and the original symposium plans were changed. And so experts of this nation will be discussing mass communication with a focus on the present crisis. The remarks of Japanese specialists are, of course, also important. The predicaments we Japanese are now diversely exposing in today’s mass communication will be examined. This is particularly essential now, and I hold expectations that it will shed light on our course of action, which will involve the next generation as well in difficulties that will continue for a long time hereafter.

I had initially prepared to talk on the theme of expression as an individual and expressions of mass communication, but I decided instead to speak closer to the new orientation of today’s gathering. Please forgive me should I give you the impression that I haven’t fully thought through what I want to say.

In the wake of the March 11 devastation, overseas media voiced encour-
agement to the people of Japan. Two distinct features were reflected even in the interviews that a writer such as I received from several overseas mass media organs. One was a voice appraising the manner in which the people of Japan who had sustained the earthquake and tsunami damage were comporting themselves, in particular the ways in which they followed rules and suppressed their panic. We saw this reality, every day, also in the reporting carried out by domestic mass media. As a citizen of Tokyo, I pay my respects to the victims in east Japan. Their discipline also points to the substance that forms the bedrock of the efforts all Japanese expend on the ever long road to recovery.

The other reverberation from overseas came in the form of a question, namely, what have Japanese learned from mankind’s first experience of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? To which I would add the victims of the hydrogen bomb tests around Bikini Atoll. And a follow up question: How have these experiences affected the attitudes of Japanese in terms of the so-called peaceful utilization of atomic energy – at least until the Level 7 accident, on a par with Chernobyl, at Fukushima?

What I hope of global mass media – or perhaps I should say what is hoped from global mass media – is coverage of how the citizens, who followed the rules of Japan and suppressed their panic, start movements clearly criticizing our government’s nuclear energy policies. I say this as a Japanese citizen who, of course, should be participating in this movement – and as an intellectual who has already grown old – for currently, throughout Japan, where there are nuclear reactors, tensions are running high between motions to re-operate them and opposition on the scale of local governments. This is manifesting in ever clearer movements day by day. And it is under these circumstances that I am presenting this talk.

Let me first comment on a topic I had prepared as the central theme of today’s talk, something I have been doing since I was young and am still doing today in my old age, namely, “giving expression as an individual”. This will entail
my talking about what sort of stance that I–this expresser through words, as an individual–have been aware of vis-à-vis the expressions of the very diverse domestic and global mass media. My remarks will of course be based on my experiences as a novelist.

Let me start by commenting on the sort of life habits novelists have, especially one like me – a self-introduction as it were. When I was invited to attend this gathering, I immediately thought: What “reservoir of words” do I have related to the term “mass communication”?

The expression “reservoir of words” may ring old-fashioned in Japanese, but ever since I was a child, it has been a habit of mine to memorize words which enticed me in their entirety – by which I mean their context, its connection with their meanings, and to use a somewhat special expression, their hue. By “since I was a child” I refer to a special time in the modern history of this country – namely, the time of its restart after its defeat in the Pacific War.

In a moment I will cite a childhood example from the “reservoir of words” which has been my habit to store, not only since my childhood in this transition period, but even now as I face old age. Before I do this, though–and again this is part of what I had originally prepared for today – I would like to describe how I was first aroused by the word “communication” and where it fits in my “reservoir of words”. I tried to think about what “mass communication”, the term itself, the very theme of this conference, means to me. As I contemplated the term, what first confronted me, as a writer, was the word “communication”.

The compound “mass communication” had not in fact made a particular impression on my feeling – which is to say, it had not struck me in such a way as to be part of my “reservoir of words”. While I have come to frequently use “mass communication” – since I have been living in close association with its various organs – when I ask myself whether I have imbued the expression with a special hue in my own language world, I feel that I haven’t. But, when I detach “mass” from the compound, and reflect on only “communication”, an example of usage with a special nuance immediately comes to mind. The source is a passage in T. S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, a work of his later years, where the
word “communication”, as he used it, truly took a firm hold of me. Here are the lines that most struck me.

   And what the dead had no speech for, when living
   They can tell you, being dead: the communication
   Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.

These three lines, though only part of a much longer poem, independently, convey a message – or at least I felt so when I read them towards the conclusion of my late middle age.

Allow me here to quote Junzaburō Nishiwaki’s translation into Japanese, which I think best interprets the meaning I draw from Eliot’s lines.

   Mata shinda hitotachi ga ikite iru toki ni
   Kotoba de iwanakatta mono o
   Shinda toki ni hito ni iu koto ga dekiru
   Shinda hitotachi no dentatsu wa ikite iru
   Hitotachi no gengo o koete hi o motte
   Hyōmei sareru no da.

This back translates into English like this:

   And what the dead did not utter
   In words when they were living
   They can utter to people when dead
   The communication of the dead,
   Beyond the language of the living, with fire
   Is expressed

This is how Nishiwaki, himself an eminent Japanese poet, translated the three lines I cited from Eliot’s poem. He broke each of Eliot’s rather long lines into six somewhat shorter lines to produce a six-line version, which brilliantly interprets the profound intent Eliot attaches to the verse. Note that “communication” has been literally replaced by “dentatsu” in Japanese.

What I associate with this passage in the face of the Great East Japan Earthquake is again a personal matter. Last spring, my friend and playwright Hisashi Inoue passed away. Mr. Inoue was no stranger to the land hit by the great disaster, as his real life, and his verbal expression too, were deeply joined
with life there. I recall every day the “communication” of this dead man as something truly “expressed with fire”. Not a day passes without my turning my thoughts to words he would utter anew were he alive. Which is how the words – “communication” = “dentatsu” – actually exist within me – as an equation.

I mentioned earlier that I would give you an example of what I had entered in my “reservoir of words” when I was a child – 12 years old, to be exact – at a time Japan was starting anew after its defeat in the Pacific War. As I look back to that point in time, paging through all the years I have lived, I want to say that the words and expressions about which I will talk presented themselves to me precisely through “mass communication”.

When I was 10 years old, Japan, a nation which even a child understood was under the absolute sovereignty of the emperor, lost the war. I was going on 12 when the new Constitution espousing democracy was promulgated on November 3, 1946. And it was during the period, before it came into effect six months later, that I had my first brushes with newspapers and radio as mass communication.

The public was intensely educated about the new Constitution, while we children learned about it in our textbooks. Because we had never read newspapers or listened to the radio until then, what newspapers and NHK radio broadcasts offered us – that is to say, what these mediums of mass communication brought to our eyes and ears – was an altogether political and novel form of education.

The words of the Constitution – which, true to the spirit of the Fundamental Law of Education, had been written in a style that even children and young parents could understand – gradually came into our world. At no time in our history were the ideas of democracy, fundamental human rights, and peace more thoroughly discussed in the classrooms of elementary and secondary schools. This I experienced as a child in a mountain village.
Every word of the Constitution we came across in our textbook became part of our being, as did the words of the Fundamental Law of Education, which was enforced on May 3, 1947, the same day the Constitution took effect. Educational reforms in line with the new Constitution, including a new school system, enabled us children to receive a fruitful three-year education at the new-system middle school in the village to which we commuted. We were children living in a society in which political language was intensely alive. I first took interest in the Fundamental Law of Education, and then I studied the Constitution, and brought the words of the Constitution into my own language world. At no other time in my life, I think, did I see or hear so closely and frequently – or did I myself utter so positively – expressions such as “fundamental human rights” as words related to life. Likewise expressions such as “war renunciation” and “pacifism”.

I believe it has been in my character, since childhood, to be interested not so much in a specific reality as in the words through which that reality is expressed. My impression, therefore, of the Fundamental Law of Education, in particular, was that this law had been written by serious adults. I felt adults were talking, with serious faces, to us children in the provinces, and that very much pleased me.

Perhaps this had to do with the fact that I was a fatherless child. Born into a lower than middle-class family in a farming village, I had lost my father toward the end of the war and was raised by my mother. Although school teachers were different, the main characteristic of the language spoken by adults in village society was “unseriousness”.

My family was engaged in the business of getting the village farmers to grow, as a sideline, a deciduous shrub commonly known as paperbush. We refined and dried the bark of the plant, and delivered it to the government to use as raw material for paper money. The government, however, in need of large amounts of currency due to the post-defeat inflation, resorted to using a coarser paper. Our family thus lost its business, and because as I said my father had died, my mother started a new business, of getting farmers to cultivate orchards, of sweet chestnuts for example, and sell such products in towns and cit-

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ies. So every day, I listened to the business talk that transpired between the fruit growers and my mother, and became aware that their conversation was laced with sexual metaphor. When I pointed this out to my mother one day, she replied, with ire and contempt: "Rural men in this country are incapable of speaking except with unserious words!"

In sharp contrast, the language of the Constitution and the Fundamental Law of Education that we learned from our teachers at middle school was serious, which I found very agreeable. When I mentioned this to my mother, she said: "Many people have died in the war. The people who wrote these laws, all are men who lost one or two members of their family. When they experience death in their families, men too become serious. And so these men have endeavored to write such laws. You too, when graduating from high school after the new-system middle school, must go to a university in Tokyo, and listen to the words of professors who have become serious from the same experiences!" I obediently followed my mother’s teachings, and created my life accordingly.

From the time I was in the new-system middle school, I wrote down in my notebook the decent and serious words I came across, and entered them in my “reservoir of words”. I felt that the words were serious, to the point that in many of them emerged a certain sorrow, and that what my mother had said was correct. Both the Constitution and the Fundamental Law of Education include a word which I remarked in my “reservoir of words” notebook as being the most agreeable. The word was kikyū suru, a verb meaning “to aspire”. It appears in the first phrase of Article 9 of the Constitution, which begins "Nihon kokumin wa, seigi to chitsujo o kichō to suru kokusai heiwa o seijitsu ni kikyū shi . . . ." I went to the school library to confirm how this had been translated into English, and copied in my notebook: “Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people . . . .” I still remember it.

I also recall that, to the middle school boy that I was at the time, this phrase was the most important in my “reservoir of words”. The phrases that followed, pertaining to the renunciation of war as a sovereign right of the nation, and the non-recognition of the right of belligerency, I recall as having been rather secondary to me. But there it was, in my life – “aspiring sincerely to an
international peace “– its style etched into my spirit and flesh. In those days, since there were no substantial books to be found around boys in farming villages, other than the textbooks in which such expressions were printed, these were the words and styles of mass communication that first influenced me.

I will now turn to the huge crisis that confronts our nation and our people today, a crisis comparable in magnitude only to our defeat in the war and to the period that immediately followed it. Here too, as before, I will speak only in terms of the personal experiences of a writer already far along in life.

As I mentioned at the beginning, I had received requests for interviews from several newspapers representing overseas media. With reporters I had known for some time, such as the correspondent from the French paper Le Monde, there were firm mutual understandings from the start. However, in queries from a German and a few other papers, there were differences in perception which required me to explain my basic stance. Such differences, though, had the effect of making me aware of things about which I had not previously given any thought. And this is what I would like to talk about.

Needless to say, the queries were made right after the Great East Japan Earthquake. Two typical examples of queries that involved differences, and the perceptions they later brought me, are as follows.

The first query was this: “You wrote in Hiroshima Notes about the doctors who treated the victims of the atomic bombing, though they themselves had been exposed. Workers are now being compelled to perform dangerous tasks under conditions of high-level radiation leakage from the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident. Do you also view their acts as heroic?”

And I replied like this: “Not once in Hiroshima Notes did I use the adjective heroic. I wrote that the actions of the doctors exposed at Hiroshima, are to be remembered as quintessentially human and noble acts. At the Fukushima plant as well, I hope only that the workers endeavoring in the emergency activities there will be able to do human work, and I think it is impermissible for
any power to drive them to heroic acts.

Now, at a stage more than two months after the disaster, we know more about the harsh conditions under which Tokyo Electric Power Company and affiliate company workers continued to perform their tasks for long hours while exposed to high-level radiation. And I feel ashamed of myself for having been so insensitive to the German newspaper reporter’s ironical query.

The other question went like this: “A few days after the catastrophe, the Emperor presented a short message on television. What do you, as a critic of the Emperor, think about this behavior?”

My response to this was as follows: “I am not so much a critic of the Emperor, as a person who prizes the democratic Constitution, and have lived in consideration of its principles. As regards the Emperor, I consider important the words of Article 4, Paragraph 1, where it says ‘The Emperor . . . shall not have powers related to government.’ I therefore regard all utterances by the Emperor as those of someone who does not have such powers. Yet I would like to carefully observe how, in a crisis as huge as this, the people who have ‘sovereignty’ react to the Emperor’s utterances to the people.”

I am not at all happy with the officialesque tone of my reply to the reporter. Have I really been carefully observing such matters? I intend to talk about this on a different occasion.

Allow me now to turn to the theme I prepared anew when revising my original talk. The theme concerns a man who confronted – and at times collaborated with – this country’s mass media in a manner totally different from that of novelists like myself, who tenaciously adhere to their “individual expression”. The man first appeared in merely a line or two of a media report, but in the manner of that appearance, the course of his life from then – which perhaps one could call his special destiny – was already portended. Moreover, the man determined his own unique attitude through a long period of silence. Then, again through the medium of mass communication, he began to aggressively
express himself, and continues to do so. I recently engaged in a long conversa-
tion with this man on television. And I confirmed how he has developed himself
as a human being incomparable with anyone else. The man is Matashichi Ōishi.
I am a year younger than he, so of the very same era.

From the motives mentioned earlier, I conceived my future in the new-sys-
tem middle school, and determined to go on to high school, then college. I en-
tered Tokyo University when I was 19 years old, and I recall that on my first
day of class, on elementary French grammar, I received a book with a hard or-
ange cover – a book on verb conjugations – and that later, when leaving the
campus, in the plaza near the gate, I happened upon a student making a speech.
This was in April 1954. A month before this, the United States had conducted a
15-megaton hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll, a bomb 1000 times more pow-
erful than the one dropped on Hiroshima. An incident had occurred in which
Ralph E. Lapp, an American physicist, who had himself supervised the test, had
written that the world might never have known of it, had the 23 Japanese fish-
ermen on the Daigo Fukuryū Maru not been exposed to the blast. This was
what the activist was talking about.

Hearing that one of the youngest fishermen had quit middle school to be-
come a fisherman – and had been exposed to the blast at age 20, after working
for six years – I thought it possible that I, too, might have pursued the same
fate as this young man. I thought about this youth again, when later I heard the
news of the death of a senior crew member whose name, Mr. Kuboyama, was
also widely disseminated.

I learned from Mr. Ōishi during our conversation on TV that, at the hospi-
tal where the fishermen were being treated, he had been in the bed next to Mr.
Kuboyama’s, and that when Mr. Kuboyama died, Mr. Ōishi felt that he himself,
who had also been exposed, was the same as the dead man, and that the dead
man was he himself.

Allow me to recite some of the events in the chronology of Mr. Ōishi’s life,
starting the year following the Bikini Atoll test.

January 1955 – Japan and the United States sign a compensation accord to
settle the Bikini incident, which had occurred nine months earlier.
March 1955 – Secretary of State John Foster Dulles publicly proclaims the possible use of nuclear weapons in the event of an all-out attack on China.

May 1955 – 22 of the Daigo Fukuryū Maru crew members are released from the hospital.

August 1955 – The First World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs is convened in Hiroshima.

November 1955 – Mr. Ōishi abandons his fishing profession and goes to Tokyo to apprentice at a laundry. (Mr. Ōishi later says that he “fled” to Tokyo.)

April 1957 – The Atomic Bomb Survivors Relief Law enters into force (but excludes those exposed at Bikini).

May 1957 – Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi states that nuclear arms for self-defense are possible.

July 1957 – The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is established.

August 1957 – An experimental nuclear reactor at Tōkaimura, in Ibaraki prefecture north of Tokyo, reaches criticality.

April 1958 – Both houses of the Diet adopt a resolution banning atomic and hydrogen bombs.

1959 – Mr. Ōishi marries (his first child is stillborn).


October 1962 – Cuban Crisis.


October 1963 – China conducts its first atomic bomb test.

May 1965 – Tōkai No. 1, Japan’s first commercial nuclear reactor, at Tōkaimura, reaches criticality.

March 1967 – The training ship Hayabusa, formerly the Daigo Fukuryū Maru, is abandoned at Yumenoshima (“Dream Island”), a landfill
dump in Tokyo Bay (recovered in 1976 and restored, it is now on display at the Tokyo Metropolitan Daigo Fukuryū Maru Exhibition Hall).

June 1967 – China conducts its first hydrogen bomb test
December 1967 – Prime Minister Eisaku Satō proclaims the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, namely, that Japan shall not possess or produce nuclear weapons, nor permit their introduction into its territory.

I don’t recommend that speakers recite chronologies like this in their talks. The reason I did so is because, in March 1966, a year after the ship was abandoned, the Asahi Shimbun carried a letter to the editor titled “Can the Daigo Fukuryū Maru be left to sink?” , which brought the vessel back to life, and Mr. Ōishi, for the first time in 14 years since the Bikini incident, went to see it with another crew member.

Mr. Ōishi writes in his book – This much I want to say: Behind the surface of the Bikini Atoll incident (Kamogawa Publishing) : “Since then, some changes may have taken place in me. . . . At the time I fled I wasn’t given to talking, and having been a fisherman, I was totally unsuited for business, and I especially hated the media. But I turned 180 degrees, which even for me was unthinkable.”

Mr. Ōishi, who had been silent until then, began to talk. He became an expresser in mass media, and he continues to be so now.

Mr. Ōishi has authored three books. In the one I just cited, published in 2007, he relates in detail that the nuclear weapon experimentally dropped on Bikini Atoll was identified by Japanese scientists – based on their analysis of the “ashes of death” that the fishermen had brought back with them – as a hydrogen bomb, and that they even ascertained its structure – but such facts, as well as studies by Japanese doctors of the radiation disorders, were regarded by the United States as military secrets and suppressed, the censorship extending to media reports. (The March 16, 1954 scoop in the Yomiuri Shimbun was headlined “Japanese fishermen in distress in Bikini atomic bomb test / 23 suffer atomic illness”. The term “hydrogen bomb” was not used. Also, the expression
“ashes of death”, which spread throughout the world, was created by the writer of the Yomiuri article.) Revealing such behind-the-surface matters is the first reason Mr. Ōishi’s book is important.

A second reason, as is already evident in the chronological overview, lies in its concise descriptions of the polar movements the incident gave rise to in a short span of time, namely, the swell of public opinion opposed to nuclear testing — for radioactive rain had become a national experience — and of movements to ban atomic and hydrogen bombs on one side, and on the other, the motions for Japan to introduce atomic power technology and atomic reactors, and enriched uranium from the United States. Mr. Ōishi straightforwardly writes of these developments, tying them together with the radical changes in mass communication and its role.

“At that time,” Mr. Ōishi writes, “the CIA mobilized the Yomiuri Shimbun and Nippon Television Network, which were owned by Shōriki, to dampen the heightened public opinion in Japan against atomic energy, which had been triggered by the Daigo Fukuryū Maru incident, and after accomplishing this they tried to get government leaders to swallow the deployment of nuclear weapons in Japan.” (Shōriki, of course, is Matsutarō Shōriki, Japan’s media mogul. Also, by this time, commercial television had started.)

Mr. Ōishi remarked that nuclear testing continued throughout the world, and that by the early 1980s the number of nuclear warheads had reached 50,000, and expounded his view that the fear of atomic power plants is tantamount to that of nuclear bombs. He added that, in April 1986, a nuclear accident occurred at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, and that we are now experiencing an accident of an equivalent scale at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, with prospects of its resolution still uncertain.

Towards the end of our dialogue, Mr. Ōishi broached the matter of “responsibility”. As we are now seeing, he said, the accident is bringing about huge sacrifices, which are not stopping as a domestic event; and while the catastrophe is starting to bring about global effects due to radioactive substances, Fukushima has yet to reach prospects of conclusive resolution. Regarding the enormous sacrifices it is bringing about, who will take responsibility? – I gath-
ered that Mr. Ōishi had asked me whether anyone had taken responsibility in light of his own experience, meaning from his exposure to the bomb at Bikini to this very day.

About ten days before my discussion with Mr. Ōishi, I was thinking about the interview of former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone carried in the Asahi Shimbun on April 26, titled “Nuclear Energy and Japanese”. I will not summarize its details for I am sure those of you who are assembled here, who have strong interests in today’s mass communication, have read the article, which used an entire page in this paper. Here I will only contrast Mr. Nakasone’s article – in terms of the salient moves toward the so-called peaceful utilization of nuclear energy Japan’s political and business worlds and mass media pursued after the Bikini incident, as I appended earlier to this talk in the form of citing Mr. Ōishi’s chronology – with Mr. Ōishi’s take on these moves as reported in the same book.

Mr. Ōishi writes:

On January 4, 1955, the Bikini incident was formally settled, and on the 11th, one week later, a document was delivered from the United States to the Government of Japan to sound out its acceptance of enriched uranium. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs kept this entirely secret. Because they feared strong reaction from the national public opinion swelling in opposition to nuclear tests. . . . It is very likely that the Japanese side took advantage of the Bikini incident as an opportune bargaining tool to quickly introduce atomic energy technology and nuclear reactors into the country. It would agree to nuclear tests in the Pacific as the United States wanted; it would cooperate. As for the demands for huge compensations for injuries, small monetary condolences would do. Instead, hasten the introduction of atomic energy technology and nuclear reactors that Japan seeks. . . .

As though to support this view, the Bikini case was settled in only nine months, and on June 21 of the same year the Japan-U.S. Atomic Energy Agreement was signed in Washington, and the following year, in 1956, a nuclear reactor was sent to Tōkaimura in Ibaraki prefecture – such was the speed at which
events transpired.

Mr. Ōishi continues:

Japan’s nuclear electric power generation starts here. In other words, the victims of Bikini were made human sacrifices to Japan’s nuclear electric power generation.

In the newspaper interview, Mr. Nakasone relates the developments during this time, from the retrospective viewpoint of a politician who was most influential during this period, and more so after it.

The biggest issue for postwar Japan was energy... The big question, in recovering from the defeat, in becoming independent, was how to secure energy. And we set our eyes on atomic energy. We regarded it, with the promotion of science and technology, as the twin pillars of our recovery. When we learned that President Eisenhower was making a policy shift to a peaceful utilization of atomic energy, we thought, “Japan must not lose in this. Next would be the age of atomic energy”.

We are all familiar with Mr. Nakasone’s great achievements thereafter. His conclusion concerning the enormous accident at the Fukushima power plant is as follows:

While we have incurred considerable damage, in view of the accident this time, we must thoroughly examine it, and with this as a lesson, continue our nuclear power policy, and move on. We must bear in mind world trends, the nation’s future, Japan’s energy, and science and technology, overcome this disaster and difficulties, and courageously move forward. This is the life force of the today’s Japanese race. World trends do not deny the peaceful use of nuclear power, the use of its energy.

The time allocated to me is running out. Let me try, at this stage, to put into order how now I am trying to live this crisis, facing the future. And what I discover is that, the future time that I, already an old man, am trying to think about, is not my own time as an individual, a time short and limited.
During the greatest crisis in the life I have lived until now, namely during the ten years after the defeat in the previous Great War, as I mentioned earlier, as a young boy in the provinces – encouraged by the new Constitution, and by the Fundamental Law of Education, which this nation, the people of this nation accepted as their own – I resolved to obtain a higher education. And, living in the midst of that continual progress, I became an old man – meaning that it was a life which now again, in its simple course, stuns me. Already its end is apparent, to the extent that phrasing it in the past tense seems more natural. So when I say I am trying to think about how to go on living facing the future, in fact, to put it simply, I am thinking about that sort of beginning of life, of the generation that will be living the next ten years at a time its adolescents will go on to become youth. I feel that their difficulties will be several fold the difficulties of my generation during the ten years after the defeat in the war. We strove to walk into the world after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but for children and adolescents right now, Fukushima is a matter in progress.

Immediately after March 11, on television, young people, whose identity was obscure to old people like myself, incessantly issued greetings like "Hang in there, Japan!" and "Japan is alright!" These greetings were ones that truly seem to join voices with the foregoing convictions of Mr. Nakasone. The voice I now wish to issue, facing this nation’s people, the children and adolescents I think about, is not at all of that kind.

However, as much as I actually try to raise my own voice, the words are not clear. I have only the thought of attempting to issue some sort of voice, every day, while gazing squarely at what is now happening, what is progressing. And what is standing before me is the person who began studying in a new middle school as a member of the new postwar generation, the very same generation as mine, but who, in order to rescue the poverty of his family, quit school and embarked on a life working as a fisherman, and nine years later was exposed to the hydrogen bomb at Bikini. And in reflection I realize that I have lived with this man from Bikini to Fukushima. My voice should overlap the voice he has continued to issue. With that resolve, I would like to think about the people of this nation who will live the next era, as I would like to live my
own few remaining days.

(Translated by Kunioki Yanagishita)